



News Release

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Kids, warm days, and vehicles — a deadly combination

Deaths from overheating are preventable with a few simple steps

OLYMPIA — With hot weather in the forecast this holiday weekend, take a few minutes to consider what you may have left in your vehicle. If it's your children, a few minutes in a hot car can mean the difference between life and death.

Kids are at serious risk of heatstroke when left alone even for a few minutes in a vehicle. From 1998 to 2007, more than 350 kids died in our country from heatstroke when left or trapped inside a vehicle. In 2008, 42 children died from overheating after being left in hot vehicle. Even relatively cool temperatures of 70°F can send temperatures inside a car to dangerous levels in just minutes.

"It's a tragedy when a parent has to bury a child," said State Health Officer Dr. Maxine Hayes.

"This kind of tragedy can be prevented if adults know the dangers and always remember not to leave their children in a hot car."

Heat is much more dangerous to children than adults. A young child's core body temperature can increase up to five times faster than an adult when left in a hot vehicle. This can cause permanent injury or death. Heatstroke occurs when the core body temperature reaches 104°F. A core body temperature of 107 is considered lethal.

"The temperature inside a car can rise 19 degrees above the outside temperature in just 10 minutes," said Mary Borges, director of Safe Kids Washington. "In just an hour, the temperature inside and outside of a vehicle can differ by more than 45 degrees. And cracking a window doesn't help. It has little effect on the inside temperature."

A study by San Francisco State University showed more than half of kids were accidentally left behind in a closed, parked car by parents or caregivers; nearly a third were trapped while playing in an unattended car; and one in five who died were intentionally left in the car by an adult.

Safe Kids suggests these tips for parents and caregivers:

- Never leave a child unattended in a vehicle, even with the window slightly open.
- Always lock a vehicle's doors and trunk — especially at home. Keep keys and remote entry devices out of children's reach.
- Place something that you'll need at your next stop — a purse, a lunch, gym bag, or briefcase — on the floor of the backseat where the child is sitting. This simple reminder could help prevent you from accidentally forgetting a child.
- Teach children not to play in, on, or around vehicles.

The [“Never Leave Your Child Alone” program](http://www.usa.safekids.org/skbu/cars/nlyca.html) (www.usa.safekids.org/skbu/cars/nlyca.html) is part of “Safe Kids Buckle Up,” a nationwide program created in 1996 to teach families how to keep children safer in and around vehicles. The program has reached more than 19 million people, through hands-on educational activities, car seat checkup events, and community outreach.

Safe Kids Washington works to prevent accidental childhood injury — the leading killer of children 14 and under. Safe Kids Washington is a member of Safe Kids Worldwide, and is led by the [Department of Health's injury prevention program](http://www.doh.wa.gov/hsqa/emstrauma/injury) (www.doh.wa.gov/hsqa/emstrauma/injury).

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